payable by the members. This is contrary to the EPS which does not require any contribution to be recovered from the employees; and

(v) There is no consent of ONGC Employees Association for exemption from the EPS.

Since the EPS is of compulsory and statutory nature, ONGC was advised to settle the issue in consultation with the Ministry of Labour. However, ONGC has reported that consequent on turning down of their request by Ministry of Labour the Association of Scientific & Technical Officers (ASTO) and all Recognised Unions of ONGC jointly filed a Writ Petition No. 486 of 1999 before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and the matter is *sub-judice.* No further directions can be issued in the matter, therefore.

Stoppage of Construction of Bina Oil Refinery

122. SHRI RAGHAVJI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for which the construction work of proposed oil refinery at Bina in Madhya Pradesh had stopped;

(b) whether the said obstacles have since been removed, if not, by when these are likely to be removed; and

(c) by when the construction work of the above oil refinery is going to be recommended and by when this refinery will start production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) Construction work of the proposed refinery at Bina (Madhya Pradesh) was held up due to non-receipt of clearance for the crude import facilities at Vadinar (Gujarat) under Wild Life protection Act (WLPA) from Government of Gujarat and subsequent environment clearance from Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOE&F).

(b) While the clearance under WLPA has been received from the

Government of Gujarat on 4.2.2000, requisite clearance under the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification from MOE&F is awaited.

(c) Efforts are being made to initiate the work on the project after receipt of balance clearances. The refinery is expected to be completed within 48 months thereafter.

Exploration Blocks accorded to Private Companies

123. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of New Exploration Licensing Policy;

(b) the number of Exploration blocks awarded to private sector companies for oil exploration during 1999-2000;

(c) what are those Exploration blocks and the terms and conditions laid down before those companies for exploration of oil and natural gas; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) The salient features of New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) are as under:—

— Level playing field to National Oil Companies *vis-a-vis* private oil companies.

— No signature, discovery or production bonus.

— No mandatory state participation.

— No carried interest by National Oil Companies (NOCs).

— Income Tax Holiday for seven years from start of commercial production.